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WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN BUYING SHIRTS

After Congress asked the Bureau of Home Economics to look into utilization of cotton in the household, the bureau's studies included textile materials like broadcloth, used widely for men's shirts, marquisette curtain fabrics, cotton hosiery, sheeting and toweling.

Along with the broadcloth studies the bureau studied other cotton fabrics used for men's and boys' shirts. A consumer's bulletin on the subject recently appeared. Whether the men of the family buy all their own shirts or delegate this task to their wives or mothers, "Cotton Shirts for Men and Boys" contains pointers that even the experienced buyer may find worth knowing. Anyone can get a copy by writing to the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

For instance, a good grade of shirt carries a label that tells whether the shirt has been preshrunk for permanent fit. After laundering, the measurements should be the stamped size. Poor-quality shirts are rarely preshrunk, and no allowance is made for shrinkage. Some of them shrink as much as 10 percent in one direction. So shrinkage information is highly desirable.

Another point to look for on the label is a manufacturer's guarantee of permanent color. That means that the shirt will keep its color when laundered, that it won't fade when worn in the sun or hung out after washing, or discolor by perspiration. "Vat dyes" generally mean colors that are fast to light and laundering.

Whatever the shirting material, it comes in both good and poor qualities, determined by the kind and grade of fiber, the size, twist and ply of the yarn,

the number of yarns per inch, and several other points. Sometimes the manufacturer's label gives such information about the fabric.

Mercerized broadcloth is a favorite fabric for business and dress shirts. The textile specialists explain that mercerization is a chemical process that strengthens the yarn and gives a smooth lustrous finish. Mercerized cottons wear longer and do not soil as easily as fabrics with a rougher finish. Some of the poorer quality broadcloths have a finish imitating mercerization which disappears in the first wash.

The bulletin gives considerable information on the features that make a good-quality or poor-quality broadcloth, and how to tell other shirtings, such as oxford cloth and chambray. Incidentally, the difference between madras and percale is that madras has woven stripes, and percale is printed on one side only.

A number of details of cut affect fit and comfort of shirts and determine quality. One of these is a full-cut back, giving plenty of freedom in using the arms. The yoke is rounded higher at the center back to take care of the natural rounding of the shoulder muscles, and fullness is eased into the yoke all across the back or set in gathers at the shoulder blades, where it is needed. Pleats or gathers set in the middle of the back, do little if any, good.

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